

EBERHARD THIESEN



AUTOMOBILE RARITÄTEN SEIT 1972



**1929 – Bentley 4.5 Litre Blower
Vanden Plas Tourer Le Mans Style
„Prototype“**

Eberhard Thiesen GmbH & Co. KG

Tarpen 40 – Halle 12 | 22419 Hamburg / Germany | T +49 (0) 40 99 99 86 80 0

Web www.eberhard-thiesen.de E info@eberhard-thiesen.de



1929 – Bentley 4.5 Litre Blower Vanden Plas Tourer Le Mans Style



- The first production and "prototype" car of only 50 factory-built 4½-litre supercharged examples for homologation
- Exhibition car on Bentley's stand at the 1929 Olympia Motor Show and ex-factory demonstrator, tested by motor car magazines
- Very original with 'matching' engine, supercharger, chassis (except front axle), true-to-type gearbox from another Blower
- First original body from 1929 potentially for sale separately
- Extensive history well known, detailed expertise from Bentley specialist Dr Clare Hay and service logs / invoices available
- Eligible for concours and historic racing events worldwide



This Automobile

The 4½-litre supercharged Bentleys from the period 1929 to 1931 – commonly referred to as "Blowers" – are among the brand's most legendary early models. They date from the era when Bentley cars were very successful in motor racing and won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1924, 1927 (3-litre models), 1928, 1929 and 1930 (4½ and 6½-litre models). Only Alfa Romeo, Jaguar, Ferrari, Ford and Porsche had been so successful there since 1923. Bentley owed its success above all to the so-called "Bentley Boys" – an illustrious group of mostly financially strong entrepreneurs, bon vivants and racing drivers centred around the then Bentley boss and investor Woolf Barnato. The idea of supercharging the 4½ Litre came from racing driver Sir Henry "Tim" Birkin, also one of the "Bentley Boys", in 1929.



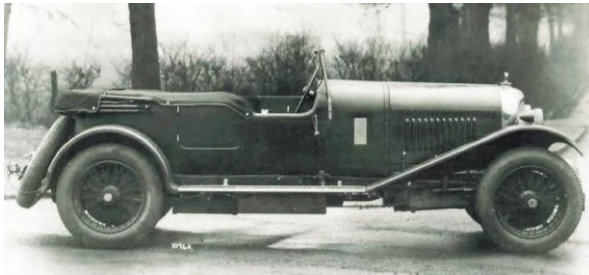
This 4½ litre Blower Bentley is the first of the 50 vehicles built in series for homologation and the only one built in 1929. As such a "prototype", it still has, among other things, the same frame head and shock absorbers as the five factory racing cars previously built as the "Birkin Blower". The car remained in factory ownership for the time being and was exhibited by Bentley at the London Olympia Motor Show on 17 October 1929. There it celebrated the world premiere of this model and established the image of those legendary supercharged Bentleys. Compared to Bentley's massive 6½-litre in-line six-cylinder engine, the 4½-litre four-cylinder was lighter and more agile in driving, but developed almost the same power of over 180 hp thanks to the supercharger. As a result, the "Blower" achieved a performance level that would do like a today's "super sports car" by the standards of the time.

Because the factory-intended engine was not ready in time for the Olympia Motor Show in October 1929, Bentley presented the car there with an engine that had been borrowed from one of the five "Birkin Blower" racing cars built in advance. However, it was converted to the correct engine according to the "Production Logbook" as early as November 1929.

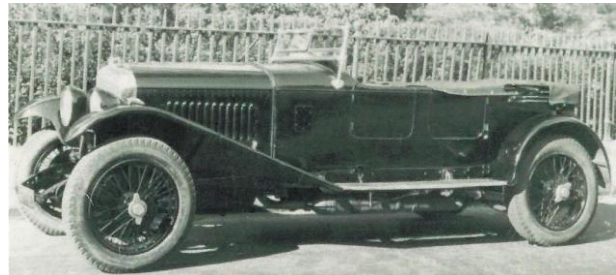
From the very beginning, the chassis of this example has always had a four-seater Open Tourer body from English coachbuilder Vanden Plas (VdP), which values the vehicle historically correct in



terms of design and appearance. Especially in comparison to many Bentley saloons that were later transformed into sporty "open tourers" with the Vanden Plas look. However, the original motor car shown at the Olympia Motor Show in its two-tone "Le Mans Green / Dockers' Champagne" paint scheme was probably a little too extravagant (according to Clare Hay) and was fitted with a new single-colour Standard Sports Four-Seater Tourer body by Vanden Plas in April 1930. Still owned by Bentley Motors, this first 4½ litre supercharged example was used as a factory demonstration car and made available to automobile journalists. Hence, exact this car was illustrated, tested and described in some magazines of the time like "The Motor" in April 1930 and "Motor Sport" in January 1931 (see illustrations on page 6). It remained in factory ownership as a demo car until September 1931.



Second original Vanden Plas body
(from 1930 to presumably 1960s/1970s)



First original Vanden Plas body fitted on another
known Bentley and possibly to acquire

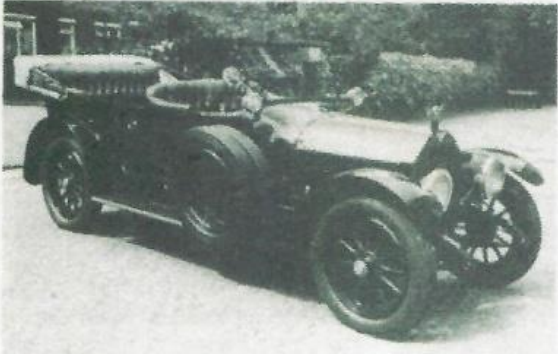
When Bentley was taken over by Rolls-Royce in November 1931, the car was initially sold to the authorised Bentley dealer Jack Barclay in London (the Bentley dealer still exists today), who passed the car on to the dealer Frank Scott in Newcastle in February 1932. Through him, the Bentley then came to its first private owner: Bentley enthusiast J. Weston Adamson from Northallerton/Yorkshire. In 1933, he sold the car to A. James McAlpine in Wrexham/North Wales. In his ownership, the Bentley was involved in an accident in August 1934. As a result, the front axle was replaced by another overhauled component at Wrexham Motors, which is noted in the Bentley Motors service log. The next owner was Charles Lewis from London in 1934, who probably passed the car to S.R. Miller in Watford in 1939 at the latest, where it survived the war.

The owner chronicle then names Victor Doland and W.H.R. White as owners from 1946 and J.F. Gurney from 1951. In 1967, P.W. Neale became the next owner. He presumably exchanged the installed engine for another one or this had already been done before. In any case, P.W. Neale was in charge of the original power unit and kept it in his possession when the Bentley was taken over by the Australian J.T. Jeffery in 1971 at the latest. At some point during the 1960s/1970s or early 1980s, the current bodywork was installed. It is a recreation of the Vanden Plas Open Tourer bodywork in "Le Mans" style, inspired by the "team cars" used by Henry Tim Birkin at Le Mans. The attractive look includes the "Birkin" helmet mudguards, the petrol tank and the instrument panel in the cockpit.

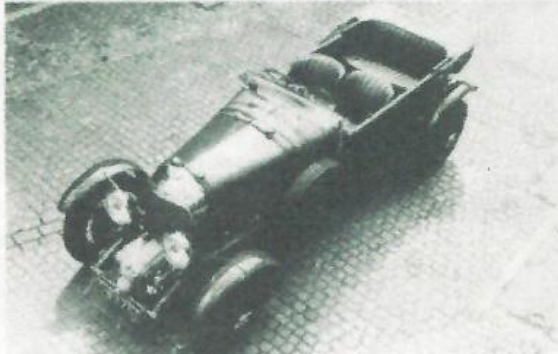
The Bentley returned to Europe in the early 1980s. It was advertised in "MotorSport" magazine via the London dealer C.A.R. Howard (see illustration on next page) in September 1982 and already had the current bodywork. The next owner (name known) in Great Britain was very fortunate



C.A.R. HOWARD LTD.



1915 Simplex 50 h.p. Chain Drive 7 Passenger Touring by Quinby. This huge car with 9-litres in four cylinders is very fast and powerful and is certainly one of the last of the great line of Mercedes-based chain-driven monsters. Totally restored.



1929 Bentley 4½-litre Supercharged Vanden Plas Sports. The 3rd Production 'Blower'. This car was the Company demonstrator and 'Motor' Road Test car. We have the original Log Book in the name of Bentley Motors and a copy of the Road Test. Restored over 12 years for a fastidious and well-known enthusiast who had intended to race it. The total mechanical overhaul included a new crankshaft, new gears, etc. Modified to Le Mans spec.

that the former owner Neale offered the retained original engine for sale in 1984. Hence, the Bentley was restored to its original condition on the drive side - including the original supercharger (Amherst Villers MK. IV Twin Rotor, System Roots). Around ten years later, the special Blower once again achieved press popularity when it was presented in a detailed driving report in the British collectors' magazine "Popular Classics" in July 1994.

Around 2011, a Swiss collector (name known) acquired the vehicle, who finally sold it to its current owner in the UK in 2013. He continued to invest in the high-quality condition and service and overhaul invoices totalling around GBP 75,000 are available for the period 2014 to 2018.

In addition to the original engine and supercharger, this first series-built Blower also has a largely original, matching-numbers rolling chassis with the exception of the previously mentioned exchanged front axle from Bentley and the manual gearbox. The gearbox with single disc clutch fitted today corresponds to the Bentley type "D" with overdrive. It comes from a later-produced 4½ litre "Blower" and is therefore true to type.

An interesting special feature in terms of originality is the first body from 1929, which was assembled at the Olympia Motor Show. This bodywork still exists today in good condition on another Bentley chassis. As the car and owner are known, it may be possible to acquire this original bodywork and return the Bentley to its original condition. This would be feasible without great expense and should significantly increase the value of this "Blower".

Alongside Bugatti and Mercedes Benz, Bentley is one of the very few brands whose superchargers from motorsport were also used in road vehicles. The aura of the early motorsport era is therefore always on the passenger seat and makes such cars eligible for top-class concours and historic racing events worldwide. This first Bentley 4½ Litre Blower, which was built in series after the factory racing cars, is certainly one of the most original examples still in existence worldwide. Its role as a "prototype" makes it even more special, rounded off by the comprehensive documentation of its history and technical details by vintage Bentley expert Clare Hay.

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April 20, 1930

Road Tests Showing Principal Characteristics

The SUPERCHARGED 4½-litre BENTLEY

FIRST REPORT OF THE ROAD PERFORMANCE OF A FINE SPORTS CAR

10 M.P.H. TO 100 M.P.H. SPEED RANGE ON TOP GEAR

slightly the car tested, and with a Vanden Plas body.

THIS recipe is as follows:—Take a sturdy chassis, install an engine rated at 20 h.p., add a supercharger, an open body, wings and windscreen, and make the complete vehicle have a speed range of from 9 m.p.h. to 103 m.p.h. on top gear. Do all these things and you will have arrived about half-way towards the achievement which the 4½-litre Bentley represents. Only half-way, because you have yet to make your car as equal as regards other important attributes, such as road-holding, gear-changing, steering and braking. . . .

This latest Bentley sports model is, indeed, far more smooth and more flexible than a car with a big shaft through a short spindle with fabric joints. On the suction side of the supercharger there are two S.H. carburetors and on the delivery side there is an additional blow-off valve. This supercharger is of the Roots blower type designed by Mr. Ambrose Villiers, and is notable for a cleverly arranged system of lubrication supplied with oil flowing by gravity from the main oil pump. Consequently, there is no need to add oil to the petrol. The pressure under which the mixture is fed naturally varies according to the speed, but ranges up to a maximum of about 10 lb. per sq. in. The engine, incidentally, develops its greatest power at revs. between 4,000 r.p.m. and 4,500 r.p.m.

Quiet Running a Feature.

A notable feature of the road performance of this car is that it is particularly quiet for a sports car, the silencing being as effective as anyone could desire. Furthermore, the whine often associated with a supercharger has been almost entirely eliminated, just a faint

(Left) The five acceleration figures obtained on 2nd, 3rd and top gears at Brooklands track.

(Right) Off-side view of the 4½-litre engine showing the safety valves on the inlet manifold.

your cylinder engine has any right to it. Perhaps this is partly due to the use of a big supercharger; driven too fast, it is of quite unusually big pistons even for these days of big engines. The net result is that although no sports enthusiast could dream of driving the Bentley through it is a topgear car, the

This Bentley in „The Motor“ magazine, April 1930

TELEPHONE: MAYFAIR 4522 (5 LINES)
BRANCH SHOW ROOMS: 34 BRUTON STREET, NEW BOND STREET W1

Jack Barclay LIMITED
MANAGING DIRECTOR: JACK BARCLAY
DIRECTORS: A.S. BARCLAY, I.H. BARCLAY

HEAD OFFICE: GEORGE STREET-HANOVER SQ. CORNER OF MADDOX STREET, LONDON-W1

TELEGRAMS: BENTLEY
FACSIMILE: BENTLEY LTD
SERVICE DEPARTMENT: 25 CHEVAL PLACE, KNIGHTSBRIDGE, SW7

Order No. 789 Sales No. _____ Chassis No. SM-3903

We the undersigned Messrs. Frank Scott Ltd. residing at Central Garage, Carlisle Square, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Hereby order from JACK BARCLAY, LTD. the undermentioned car:

MAKE AND H.P. OF CAR Used 4½-litre Supercharged Bentley

TYPE OF BODY Open four-seater

COLOUR OF PAINTING Green

UPHOLSTERY Green

Price of Car £ 495 0 0

EXTRA FITTINGS As per list attached

By allowance on 1931 Aston Martin International Sports Touring car.

£ 250 0 0

I hereby declare that the second-hand motor car Registered No. 124 26 1933 is my own property and is free from any lien or charge whatsoever.

The above Car is required by me on the 12th Feb 1933

I pay £ 1130 on account of the purchase price of the above Car the sum of £ 1130 which sum shall form part of the purchase money if I duly complete this contract.

If I do not take delivery and/or pay the balance of the purchase price of the Car hereby ordered within eight days from despatch of invoice or of advice note to the effect that the Car is at my disposal, JACK BARCLAY, LTD. shall be at liberty, if they think fit, by notice in writing to determine this contract and the deposit shall be forfeited, but without prejudice to their rights to recover from me any loss whatsoever which may be sustained by them through FRANK SCOTT LTD.

Date: 8th February 1932 Name: J.H. Scott

Sales contact of Jack Barclay, February 1932

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MOTOR SPORT

JANUARY, 1931

THE 4½-LITRE SUPERCHARGED BENTLEY

A RACE-BRED CAR OF OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE.

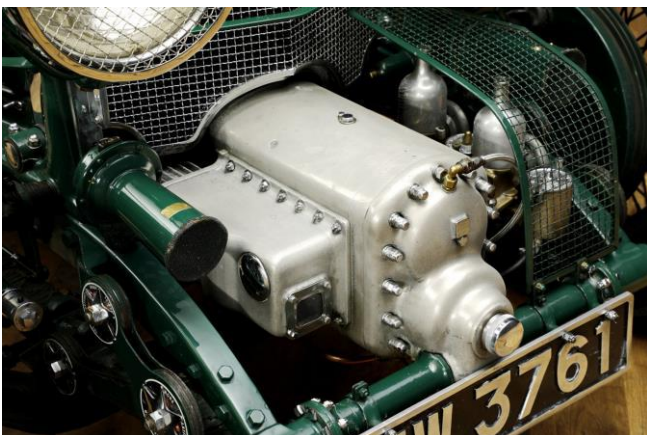
The 4½-litre Bentley as it appears for 1931.

This Bentley in „Motor Sport“ magazine, January 1931

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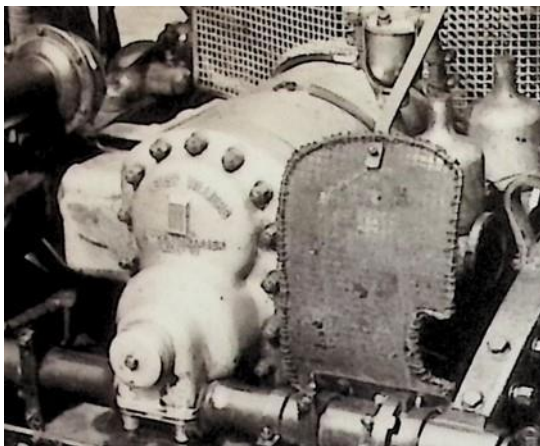


Model History

The Bentley 4½ Litre had its debut in 1927 and succeeded the 3 Litre model. As was customary at the time, Bentley only offered the rolling chassis (chassis with engine and gearbox) fitted with bodies from various coachbuilders, including Vanden Plas, Mayfair, Mulliner and Park Ward. The engine of the 4½ Litre was technically derived from the 6½ Litre six-cylinder by removing two cylinders. This resulted in an in-line four-cylinder engine with a capacity of 4,398 cc, which was very advanced in construction with four valves per cylinder. It was considered to be very reliable and resilient, which was an important basis for Bentley's motorsport successes. The 4½ Litre boosted the brand's popularity and sales with victories on the most important racetracks, such as the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1928 and 1929.



From 1929, a more powerful version with a supercharger was also available, which became known as the "Blower". This variant goes back to the racing driver Sir Henry "Tim" Birkin, one of the legendary "Bentley Boys", who rejected a larger engine with more displacement due to the higher weight. Instead, he considered using the then new supercharger technology, which Mercedes Benz was using successfully in motor racing. On his own initiative and financed by sponsor Dorothy Paget, he converted his own 4½ litre model with a Roots supercharger at the beginning of 1929. This idea was not supported by W.O. Bentley, as he followed the principle: "There is no



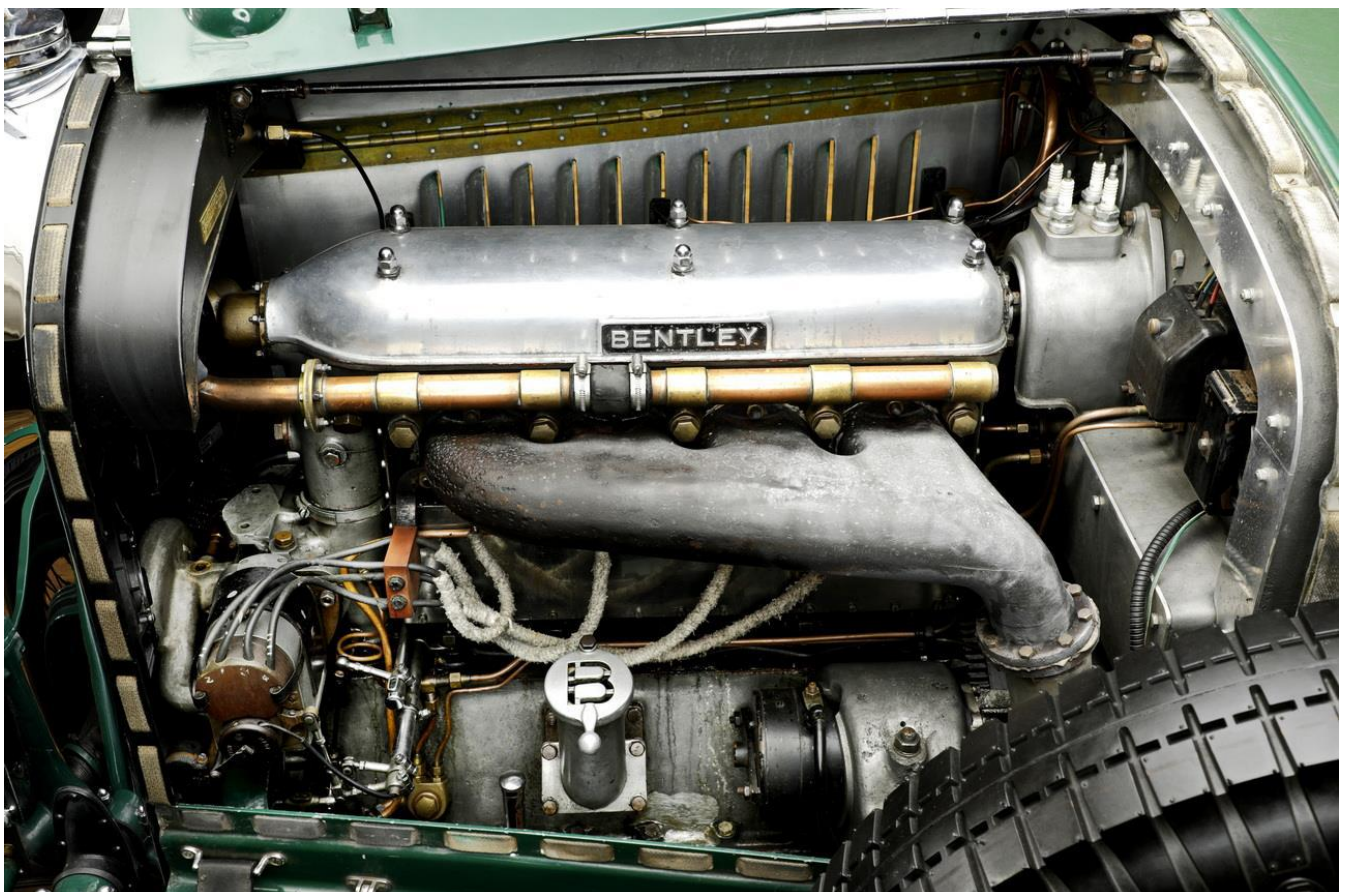
substitute for displacement. Except with more displacement." Nevertheless, Birkin received five 4½ litre models with superchargers developed by Amherst Villiers from the then company director Woolf Barnato, also a "Bentley Boy". A further 50 "Blower" vehicles were produced for the Le Mans homologation. The Birkin team cars and the factory Bentley with supercharger were the most powerful British sports cars to compete at Le Mans and Brooklands. The supercharger increased the output of the 4,398 cc engine from 110 to 175 hp and a top speed of around 200 kph was achieved

However, sales of the supercharged road vehicles were anything but a success: fuel consumption was clearly too high. In addition, the "Blower" failed to achieve any major racing successes. Apart from the fastest race lap at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1930 and a second place at the French Grand Prix in Pau in the same year, they did not achieve much. As a result, the price of the road models eventually had to be reduced from the original GBP 1,475 to GBP 1,150 in order to reduce stocks. Today, however, the 50 "Blower" factory-built Bentleys are among the most sought-after and coveted pre-war collectors' cars.



Data & Facts

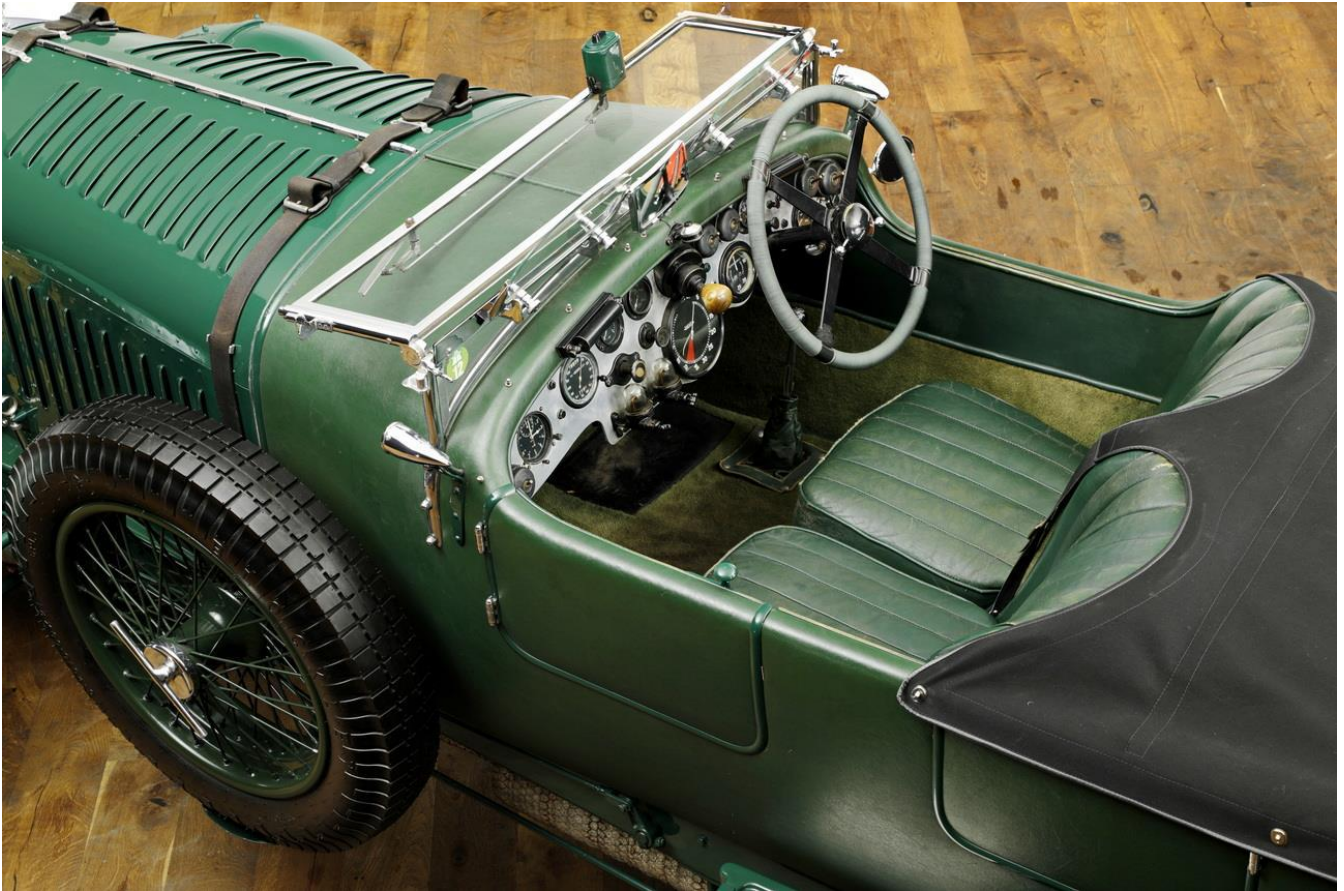
Year of manufacturing	1929, registration on 26 April 1930 (owned by Bentley Motors Ltd.)
Quantity	720 units as 4½ Litre, including 50 supercharged cars for homologation (sales) and 5 racing cars (Tim Birkin)
Colour combination	dark green (Irish or British Racing Green), leather interior green
Mileage (reading)	18,502 miles (approx. 29,769 km)
Engine	four-cylinder in-line engine with Amherst Villers MK. IV Roots supercharger (plain housing), water cooled, OHC, four valves per cylinder, two carburetors SU HVG5, dual ignition
Displacement/power	4,398 cc, approx. 180 hp at 3,500 rpm (factory data)
Gearbox	manual, 4-speed „D-Type“ with Overdrive, unsynchronised, lateral splitter gearstick inside right
Brakes	Front/rear drums, hydraulic
Empty weight	approx. 2,050 kg
Top speed	approx. 190 kph
Documents	UK registration/title (V5), Dr Clare Hay report (2013) including contemporary service log by Bentley, press articles and photos, correspondence, newer service invoices (2014-2018)



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Appendix

Location	Hamburg, Germany	
Price	on request (VAT not to be shown)	
Contact	Bastian Hubald	+49 (0) 170 – 239 31 89
	Eberhard Thiesen	+49 (0) 172 – 459 34 35

Eberhard Thiesen GmbH & Co. KG

Tarpen 40 – Halle 12 | 22419 Hamburg, Germany

T +49 (0) 40 – 99 99 86 80 0

info@eberhard-thiesen.de / www.eberhard-thiesen.de



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